

Remarks

Claims 1-11 and 14-17, 19, 20, and 22-31 remain in the application.

The amendments and arguments presented in the Request for Reconsideration are incorporated herein without being repeated.

Applicants' attorney continues to be unaware of the law which states that apparatus limitations do not limit a process claim. At a minimum, it is felt that the process impact of the doubly gated load lock is implicit. However, to make the point absolutely clear, Claims 23, 25, and 27 have been amended to explicitly incorporate process limitations into the doubly gated load lock.

The Examiner seems to now associate the transfer chamber 80 of FIG. 20 of Maydan '165 as a load lock between the two transfer chambers 80A. This terminology is contrary to that used by the present inventors and that commonly used in the art. However, to remove any ambiguity, the doubly gated load lock is now recited as having a pedestal accessible by either of the robots, as supported at page 14, lines 6-8 and page 15, lines 18-20

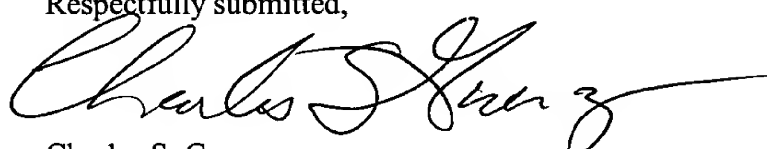
The Examiner fails to provide prior art for holding an etch transfer chamber at less than 10^{-6} Torr. Applicants' attorney is willing to be dismissed as presenting a mere statement (as yet un rebutted). However, the Examiner is not allowed to dismiss the teaching at page 9, lines 16-18 which gives chamber pressures in the range of 150 milli Torr, surely not suggesting the claimed 10^{-6} Torr. The pressure range is being claimed and the Examiner must address it.

It seems unnecessary to prepare a declaration on a point that is un rebutted in the applied art. Instead, the undersigned attorney has searched his files and found one of the original patents on transfer chambers, U.S. Patent 5,013,385 to Maher et al., copy attached. This patent does not specify the pressure in the transfer chamber beyond being "a controlled vacuum condition" (col. 4, l. 18). However, for this system with only etch chamber attached to the transfer chamber, the etching pressures range from 100 milli Torr to 700 millitorr (col. 10, ll. 11, 12, 20, 40, 47, and

52). These etching pressures are five orders of magnitude greater than the claim 10^{-6} Torr. Surely, the transfer chamber is not held at such a low pressure of 10^{-6} Torr when it is being continually exposed to reactors shortly before held at at least 100 milliTorr. Sputtering requires much lower pressures than does etching.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, consideration and allowance of all claims are respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that a telephone interview would be helpful, he is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the listed telephone number, which is on California time.

Date: 8 July 2003
Correspondence Address
Patent/Legal Dept.; M/S 2061
Applied Materials, Inc.
P.O. Box 450A
Santa Clara, CA 95052

Respectfully submitted,

Charles S. Guenzer
Registration No. 30,640
(650) 566-8040